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SIPDIS

G/IWI - ANDREA BOTTNER

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SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN: NOMINATION FOR 2009 SECRETARY'S AWARD
FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE

REF: SECSTATE 99729

¶1. SUMMARY: Embassy Baku would like to nominate Arzu Abdullayeva for the 2009 Secretary's Award for International Woman of Courage. Ms. Abdullayeva is the chairwoman of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Azerbaijan National Committee and has been an vocal advocate for human rights for over 20 years. She is a also public advocate for Azerbaijan's integration into Western institutions, and for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. END SUMMARY

NOMINATION INFORMATION

¶2. Full legal name: Arzu Abdullayeva
Job title/association: Chairwoman, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Azerbaijan National Committee
Date of Birth: March 23, 1953
Country of Birth: Azerbaijan
Citizenship: Azerbaijan
Address: Istiglaliyat 43, apt 16, Baku, Azerbaijan 1001
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JUSTIFICATION

¶3. Embassy Baku is proud to nominate Arzu Abdullayeva, Chairwoman of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Azerbaijan National Committee, for the Secretary's 2009 International Woman of Courage Award. Ms. Abdullayeva was actively involved in the national independence movement since 1988 and has been an active human rights and fundamental freedoms advocate for over 20 years. She has worked with both international and domestic partners to promote basic human rights for every Azerbaijani citizen.

¶4. In addition to her work in the human rights arena, Ms. Abdullayeva is also a member of the National Euro-integration Committee, a local NGO that aims to increase public awareness and knowledge of the European Union and its partnership programs with Azerbaijan. This work puts her among the most prominent activists in Azerbaijan's civil society for her country's westward orientation and integration into Western institutions.

¶5. Ms. Abdullayeva has also worked extensively on resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. She is actively engaged in "people's diplomacy," trying to build links with the Armenian population in the territories of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenia. Along with her counterpart in Armenia, Ms. Abdullayeva organized a fact-finding mission to the occupied territories, looking for graveyards of allegedly lost Azerbaijanis. In addition, Ms. Abdullayeva is an active

member of the "Karabakh Council," a forum of a dozen Azerbaijani historians, experts, and analysts that are looking into peaceful ways to solve the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

¶6. For over a decade, Ms. Abdullayeva has been an active advocate for political prisoners. Along with other human rights defenders, she created the Monitoring Group of Human Rights Organizations. This group has been able to build fruitful cooperation with the relevant agencies from the government of Azerbaijan and formed a joint Task Force with the government to address the issue of political prisoners. This Task Force managed to help tens of prisoners re-join their families. She has also been an advocate for improving living conditions for prisoners while they are incarcerated.

¶7. Ms. Abdullayeva is also the chairwoman of the Freedom of Expression Defense Committee, which is working on protecting the rights of journalists and is advocating for the release of imprisoned journalists. Finally, Ms. Abdullayeva works actively with youth groups to encourage participation of young students in civil society.

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